

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 CU-04 HA-05 ACDA-12
TRSE-00 OMB-01 /121 W
-----021391 291314Z /43

R 290930Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4286
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 1501

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: GHASHMI MOVES RIGHT

BEGIN SUMMARY: GHASHMI SWING TO RIGHT APPEARS TO BE
STARTING. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE ARE SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT YAR PRESIDENT GHASHMI
HAVING MANEUVERED TO GAIN SOME SUPPORT THROUGH PARLIAMENT,
MAY BE STARTING LONG-EXPECTED CAMPAIGN TO SHIFT YAR TO RIGHT.

2. FIRST, RUMORS CONTINUE TO MOUNT ABOUT IMPENDING RUPTURE
BETWEEN YAR PRESIDENT GHASHMI AND HIS UNLOVED COLLEAGUE
ON COMMAND COUNCIL, PARATROOP COMMANDER ABDALLAH ABD AL-
ALIM. MOSG PREVALENT STORY IS THAT LT. COL. MOUJAHID
KAHLI, FORMER COMMANDER OF AMRAN BRIGADE, TOLD GHASHMI
BITTERLY AFTER OUSTER FROM UNIT THAT ABDALLAH ABD AL-
ALIM HAD ENCOURAGED HIM TO DEFY GHASHMI AND EVEN
SENT FUNDS FROM SANA. STORY GOES ON THAT GHASHMI

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LATER CONFRONTED ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM WITH THIS INFORMATION.
ABD AL-ALIM DENIED IT, AND STATED THAT HE WAS PREPARED SERVE
AS SIMPLE SOLDIER OF GHASHMI. GHASHMI INTERRUPTED WITH
REFERENCE TO 1968 SPLIT IN ARMY BETWEEN NORTHERN AND
SOUTHERN UNITS, DURING WHICH LEFTIST PARATROOP COMMANDER
WAS KILLED AND SOUTHERNERS CRUSHED. "IF YOU WANT
ANOTHER AUGUST," SAID GHASHMI, "WE'RE READY."

3. THERE IS SOME INCREASE IN TENSION, WITH TROOPS IN STREET IN UNUSUAL NUMBERS, BUT MOST OBSERVERS FEEL GHASHMI HAS UPPER HAND. PARATROOP UNITS ARE REPORTEDLY BEING SCATTERED TO SITES OUTSIDE SANA, REDUCING ABD AL-ALIM'S POWER BASE. EMBOFFS HAVE BEEN TOLD SEVERAL TIMES IN LAST WEEK THAT ABD AL-ALIM HAS ACCEPTED HIS FATE, ALONG WITH ANOTHER LARGE SUM OF MONEY, THIS ONE EVEN LARGER THAN SUM WHICH GHASHMI PRESUMABLY FORCED ON ABD AL-ALIM AFTER ASSASSINATION OF HAMDI.

4. REMOVAL OF ABD AL-ALIM COULD BE SIGNIFICANT. HE IS FACE WHICH HAMDI ALWAYS TURNED TOWARDS SOVIETS. HAVING SIGNED NOVEMBER 1975 ARMS AGREEMENT IN MOSCOW, ABD AL-ALIM FEELS VESTED INTEREST IN LINKS TO SOVIET ADVISORY MISSION AND LEFT IN GENERAL. HE IS KIND OF LEFTIST HIMSELF. MANY NORTHERNERS ACCUSE HIM OPENLY OF BEING IN SYMPATHY WITH NLF BUT IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY TO US THAT, AS ONLY SOUTHERNER PROMINENT IN ARMY OFFICER RANKS, AND COMMANDER OF ELITE UNIT OF SOUTHERNERS WHICH IS CAPITAL'S PRIMARY DEFENSE AGAINST TRIBES, HE PROBABLY IS MORE ANTI-NORTHERN THAN PRO-SOUTH. BE THAT AS IT MAY, HIS REMOVAL WILL AFFECT AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL AND SECURITY BALANCE IN AMRY AND COUNTRY.

5. SECOND, MORE EVIDENCE OF GHASHMI TURN TO RIGHT IS
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PROVIDED BY ABD AL-KARIM AL-IRYANI, MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT, WHO TOLD DCM ON TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, THAT HE HAD FELT UNABLE TO RETURN TO HIS EDUCATION OFFICE SINCE THE PRECEDING THURSDAY, WHEN STORMY MEETING WITH IBRAHIM FUSAYIL, NORTHERN JUDGE WHO HAS RANK OF ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT AND HEADS OFFICE CALLED GUIDANCE AND ORIENTATION, LONG A BASTION FOR MUSLIM ARCH CONSERVATIVES. FUSAYIL HAS BEEN HEADING INCREASINGLY WIDESPREAD PROTESTS AGAINST "GODLESS SCIENCE" IN MINISTRY TEXTBOOKS; HE MEANS THEORY OF EVOLUTION IN PARTICULAR AND FAILURE OF TEXTS TO DRAW MORAL AND COSMOLOGICAL AND RACIAL AND SEXUAL LESSONS DEAR TO FUNDAMENTALISTS FROM EVIDENCE OF GEOLOGY, BIOLOGY, AND OTHER NATURAL SCIENCE. HE IS ALSO OUTRAGED AGAINST CURRICULUM CHANGES WHICH IRYANI HAS PROPOSED (SEE 77 SANA A-2) AND AGAINST HISTORY TEXTS OF YEMEN WHICH WERE DONE AS JOINT TEXT WITH SOUTH YEMEN. FUSAYIL HAS FOUND "FUNDS AND BACKING" AS IRYANI PUTS IT ANGRILY TO MOUNT PUBLIC CAMPAIGN IN MOSQUES AND STREETS AGAINST MINISTER, AND IN THURSDAY MEETING TOLD IRYANI THAT TIME HAS PASSED FOR NEGOTIATION. FUSAYIL CALLED FOR "JIHAD" AND TOLD IRYANI HE WAS IN DANGER OF BEING SHOT.

6. WELLSPRINGS OF THIS SENTIMENT ARE ABUNDANT IN YEMEN, WHICH STILL LIVES LARGELY IN CONCEPTUAL WORLD OF MEDIEVAL ISLAM. ON 24 MARCH, FULL ECLIPSE OF MOON, WHICH WAS NOT ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE, BROUGHT HUNDREDS OF SANANIS OUT INTO STREETS TO LIGHT BONFIRES. DROVES OF YOUNG MEN BANGED ON WINDOWS AND DOORS OF OFFICES THAT WERE OPEN, CALLING ON OCCUPANTS TO CLOSE AND GO TO MOSQUES TO PRAY. (IT WORKED; BY 9 PM MOON WAS BRIGHT AGAIN.) WHAT IRYANI FINDS STRIKING ABOUT ISLAMIC AND OBSCURANTIST SENTIMENT IS NOT THAT IT EXISTS BUT IT APPEARS NOW TO HAVE GOVERNMENT ENDORSEMENT. HE SAYS GHASHMI HAS REJECTED HIS (IRYANI'S) APPEAL TO BACKING AND THUS SITUATION AMOUNTS TO "OPEN ONSLAUGHT OF ONE PART OF GOVERNMENT ON ANOTHER."
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(ON FEB 28, IRYANI TOLD AMBASSADOR SAME STORY AND EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR HIS PERSONAL SAFETY.)

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TRSE-00 OMB-01 /121 W
-----021578 291314Z /45

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7. IRYANI SAYS THAT FUSAYIL HAS CONVENED COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO TEXTS AND, IN PROCESS, INTERROGATE MINISTER.

HE WILL REFUSE TO COOPERATE, HOWEVER, AND THAT WILL BRING ON "SHOWDOWN." IRYANI SAYS ALL HE WANTS IS "OUT". BOTH OUT OF OFFICE AND OF YEMEN. IRYANI SAID HE HAS WARNED HIS FRIENDS--OTHER MODERNIZERS AND SOUTHERNERS--THAT IF THEY DON'T BACK HIM NOW "THEY WILL THEMSELVES BE PICKED OFF ONE BY ONE".

8. IRYANI SAYS GHASHMI IS PLAYING INTO HANDS OF FAR LEFT. HE OF COURSE SUSPECTS THAT REAL CULPRITS IN THIS SCENARIOS OF GENERAL TURN TO RIGHT ARE SAUDIS. HE CALLS TRENDS "VERY DANGEROUS FOR YEMEN" AS THEY WILL SUCCEED IN SHORT RUN, GIVEN GROWNING POWER OF NORTHERNERS IN ARMY, BUT WILL POLARIZE COUNTRY AND PROVIDE CONTEXT IN WHICH PDRY CAN RENEW ITS CAMPAIGN FOR LIBERATION AND UNIFICATION OF NORTH.

9. THIRD, IRYANI SAYS SOUTHERN PART OF HIS COUNTRY IS
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NOW QUITE, WITH NANVFBMLNCGS OR OTHER OVERT INCIDENTS, BECAUSE PDRY WANTS TO PROVIDE NO PRETEXT FOR CRACKDOWN BY GOVERNMENT. GOVERNMENT HAS NEVERTHELESS MOVED TO ARREST SOME STUDENTS WHO HAVE DISTRIBUTED PAMPHLET ACCUSING GHASHMI OF MURDERING HAMDI. STUDENTS HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED, ACCORDING TO IRYANI, BUT ARRESTS OF LEFTISTS ARE BEING RELATED TO US BY OTHER SOURCES WHO SAY STUDENTS --INCLUDING SOME GIRLS--ARE BEING PULLED IN, IN ALL THREE MAJOR CITIES. PERHAPS IN RELATED MOVE, AUTHORITIES HELD PUBLIC EXECUTIONS YESTERDAY, MARCH 28, OF SOME COMMON CRIMINALS. ANOTHER IS SCHEDULED TODAY OF SEX OFFENDER.

COMMENT: ARRESTS, CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE IN EDUCATION AND DEPOSITION OF ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM MAY BE EARLY SIGNS OF BROADER MOVE TO TURN THIS COUNTRY DECISIVELY TO RIGHT. MOVE COULD HOLD OUT SOME BENEFITS TO USN PARTICULARLY IF IT AT LAST RESULTS IN OUSTER OF SOVIET MILITARY MISSION AND REDUCTION OF LARGE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE, OR IF IT RESULTS IN CLOSER AND MORE TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH SAUDIS. LOSS OF IRYANI, HOWEVER, DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR YEMEN'S FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. MOREOVER, MOVE TO RIGHT ON TOO MANY FRONTS, OR WITH EXCESSIVE SPEED, HAS POTENTIAL TO DISTURB DELICATE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BALANCES IN THIS COUNTRY BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, NOT ONLY SHAFAIS AND ZAYDIS, TRIBESMEN AND MODERNIZERS, BUT ARAB RADICALS IN PDRY AND ARAB CONSERVATIVES IN SAUDI ARABIA.
SCOTES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, POLITICAL SITUATION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANA01501
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780136-0230
Format: TEL
From: SANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780313/aaaaaksn.tel
Line Count: 222
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6e755ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3169109
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GHASHMI MOVES RIGHT BEGIN SUMMARY: GHASHMI SWING TO RIGHT APPEARS TO BE STARTING. END SUMMARY.
TAGS: PINT, YE, (AL-GHASHMI, AHMED)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6e755ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014